



# THE INFLUENCE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN ELT CLASSES AND THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Mr. Lakhyajit Chiring

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sadiya College, Affiliated to Dibrugarh University, Chapakhowa, Tinsukia, Assam, India.

## ABSTRACT

This paper is aimed to show the influence of mother tongue in ELT classes and the advantages and disadvantages. English deserves to be regarded as the world language in general and is a compulsory language in the educational system of our country in particular. It is taught as a second language in our schools, colleges and universities. The researcher has conducted a survey in 22 schools and 2 degree-colleges wherein he had interacted with 3 hundred students. The study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with the systematic cooperative and constructive analysis of usage in both Assamese and English languages with concrete examples. The second chapter deals with the history of the English language in India. The third or final chapter deals with the positive and negative influences of the L1 in the learning of L<sub>2</sub>.

**KEY WORDS:** Influence, mother tongue, L<sub>1</sub>, L<sub>2</sub>, advantages, disadvantages, comparison etc.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

In this noble paper or research, the researcher has traced the influence of mother tongue in English language teaching. He has also put forth the opinions held by various linguists, educationalists and specialists on language teaching. Whereas, according to some, the use of mother tongue plays a vital role in teaching a second or a foreign language. Some believe that there remains a gravitational pull of mother tongue in the native speakers or learners, which generally causes considerable interference in ELT classes. According to the views of certain writers the importance of mother tongue is infinite in developing the mental power, intelligence and personality of children. For, it is through the use of their mother tongue that they express their feelings, emotion, thought and imagination. The sufficient knowledge of one's own mother tongue helps in learning a second language like English. After acquiring the skills of language through one's mother tongue one can learn the skills of learning the English language more easily. According to educationist Ryburn, "The mother tongue is at once a tool, a source of joy, happiness and knowledge, a director of taste and feelings."<sup>1</sup> In 1953, UNESCO had declared that the mother tongue is the best medium of a child's education. Hence the three (3) language formulae evolved in 1961. This was later modified by the Kothari Commission (1964-66). This formula sought to accommodate the interests of group identity (mother tongue and regional languages), national pride and unity (Hindi) as well as administrative efficiency and technological progress (English). The life of a child is moulded through his/her mother tongue. This influence, which is seen in the entire life from birth to death of an individual, cannot be refuted. In this context, George Sampson's opinion on the mother tongue is notable, "It is not merely one occasion for the inculcation of knowledge, it is a part of a child's initiation into the life of man."<sup>2</sup> Thus, the question that we are faced with is how the teacher relates the home language to the school language or the mother tongue to the second language.

Today, this language has an indispensable status among the languages in the world. Keeping this point of view in mind Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad says, "So far as general studies are concerned, it was never my intention to suggest that there should be any falling in the standard of English. Hundred and fifty years of intimate contact has made English an integral part of our educational system and this cannot be changed without injury to the cause of education in India. In addition, English has today become one of the major languages of the world and Indians can neglect its study only at the risk of loss to themselves. I am convinced that in future as well that standard of teaching English should be maintained at as high a level as possible."<sup>3</sup> English is a world language. It is spoken as the mother tongue by the native speakers in Great Britain. Moreover, Americans and Australians also are the native speakers of English. It has now been globalized. This language occupies the whole world in every sphere of communication. In this connection Gokak says, "It would be rash to cut out ourselves from the English language which keeps us in continuous contact with the latest thoughts in Europe in every field of life and culture."<sup>4</sup> English has the place of lingua franca in India. This language has been made compulsory in the schools and colleges of India. The concept of L<sub>1</sub> implies a non-native language. Whereby, there is reference to the prior availability of L<sub>1</sub>. A second language is non-native to the speaker who generally learns it within the country. It is intended to explore and discuss the influence of mother tongue in ELT classes and the advantages and disadvantages of this research paper.

Any language learning leads to a mastery of the basic skills of listening, speak-

ing, reading and writing. In this case, the skills earned by the students in their mother tongue are assumed to help them in acquiring some basic and fundamental skills and knowledge of the structure of the English language at the lower and higher secondary stages.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study has aimed to show the influence of mother tongue in ELT classes and the advantages and disadvantages. The researcher had conducted a survey in 22 (twenty-two) schools and 2 (two) degree colleges wherein the researcher had interacted with 300 students along with some teachers. During the interactions with and the tests the researcher, under the guidance of the supervisor, had offered some questionnaires to the students ranging from high school level up to degree level. The questionnaires contain some essential questions related to styles/methods of teaching English, maneuvering, use of mother tongue, innovative formulae applied in classrooms etc. The questionnaires were distributed among both the students and teachers and professors randomly. The schools were under SEBA and CBSE. The study utilized the qualitative approach and the data collection consisted mainly of focus group discussions, intensive interviews and students' observation.

## 3. OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of running the research are as follows:

- (i) To show the real picture of influence of M.T. in ELT classes.
- (ii) To discuss the issues and challenges faced by the students.
- (iii) To show the advantages and disadvantages of the influence of mother tongue.
- (iv) To chalk out the strategy of inculcating the learners in the maximum standard way.

## 4. DISCUSSION:

The first chapter attempts a systematic, comparative and contrastive analysis of uses in both Assamese and English languages with concrete examples. There are a large number of Assamese words that are derived from Sanskrit directly. Sanskrit was the standard spoken language of India. Assamese developed her own Prakrit, which is different from Magadhan and other Indian Prakrit in some vital points. It is the easternmost member of that family of speeches which arose from the common sources such as Aryan, Indo-German or Indo-European. Sanskrit is the root language of the Assamese language. The present Assamese language is made up of the following prime elements:

- (i) The primary Prakrits of the Non-Vedic Aryans.
- (ii) The Sanskrit of the Vedic Aryans.
- (iii) The Indian Prakrits of the middle age.
- (iv) The contribution made by the modern languages of Northern India which consists generally of new 'tatsamas' and words of Arabic origin.

- (v) Some words from surrounding Non-Aryan races who also gave an analytical character more to this than to other Indian languages.

The major portions of words of the Assamese language are of Sanskrit origin. These words enriched the vocabulary of the Assamese language. The Sanskrit words that come to the Assamese language can be divided into three classes:

- (I) Tatsama
- (ii) Ardhatatsama and
- (iii) Tatbhaba words.

- i. Tatsama means equal to the meaning of Sanskrit. These words remain same in the form of writing but differ in pronunciation. For example:

Sanskrit	Assamese	Pronunciation
Anna	(anna) bhat (rice)	bhΛt
Griha	ghar (house)	ghô: etc.

- ii. Ardhatatsama means having partial difference in pronunciation and written form. For example:

Sanskrit	Assamese	Pronunciation
Darashan	darshan (visit)	ðô:tSôñ
Ratna	ratan (gain success)	rôton etc.

- iii. Tatbhaba means the words taking the Assamese form after coming through changes. For example:

Sanskrit	Assamese	Pronunciation
Hasta	hat (hand)	hΛt
Karna	kan (ear)	kΛn etc.

The Assamese language also consists of words of other sources such as foreign words, Non-Aryan words, Austro-Asiatic words, Tai-Ahom language, Tibeto-Burman language etc. As the Assamese language has evolved from the Sanskrit language through Magadhi Prakrit, the grammar of the language is also modeled on the grammar of Sanskrit. Sanskrit is the ancestor of the former studied European and Asiatic languages with its remarkably full inflexions. It may explain the use of the term 'Aryan' for what we now call Indo-European. The English language, spoken or read by the largest number of people in the world, belongs to the Indo-European family of languages which was formerly called Indo-European. Hence, we see that both the languages, Assamese as well as English can be traced back to the common mother language Sanskrit. Thus, they share a common root language. This is the reason why both English and Assamese share a number of common sounds from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). They claim that there are symbols to represent all the sounds that exist in the languages of the world, so it can be used to transcribe words of any language.

For example:

P voiceless bilabial plosive: pin, প in Assamese, পানী [pni] 'water'.

Ph voiceless aspirated bilabial plosive: paper, ফ in Assamese, ফল [phal] 'fruit'.

F voiceless labio-dental fricative: fit, ফ in Assamese, ফানী [fani:] 'comb'.

T voiceless alveolar plosive: stain, today, ত in Assamese, তুমি [tumi] 'you'.

T voiceless dental plosive: time.

T voiceless retroflex: ট in Assamese, টুপী [tupi] 'hat'.

G voiced velar plosive: get, গ in Assamese, গোলাপ [gulap] 'rose'.

C voiceless palatal plosive: চ in Assamese, চাৰি [chari] 'four'.

D voiceless alveolar plosive: দ in Assamese, দৰৱ 'medicine'.

L voiced alveolar lateral: ল in Assamese, লৰা 'boy'.

Ch voiceless aspirated palatal plosive: ছ in Assamese, ছতি [chhati] 'umbrella'.

Th voiceless aspirated dental plosive: থ in Assamese, থাপনা [thapana] 'chapel'.

Th voiceless aspirated retroflex plosive: ঠ in Assamese, ঠাই [thai] 'place'.

W voiced labio-velar semi-vowel: west.

V voiced labio-dental frictionless continuant: ব in Assamese, ব্যৱধান [byavadhan] 'difference'.

B voiced bilabial plosive: book, ব in Assamese, বগা [baga] 'white'.

I front close unrounded short vowel: ই in Assamese, ইচ্ছা [ichha] 'will'.

I front close unrounded long vowel: ঈ in Assamese, ঈগল [i:gal] 'eagle'.

A central unrounded short vowel: ago, অ in Assamese, অসম [asom] 'Assam'.

M voiced bilabial nasal: mind, ম in Assamese, মানুহ [manuh] 'man'.

N voiced alveolar nasal: not, ন in Assamese, নদী [nadi] 'river' etc.

The mother tongue has an influence in the articulation of the English sounds. Through a comparative study between the articulation system of the Assamese language and the articulation system of the English language, the place of articulation, the manner of articulation and nature of the vocal cords, we can analyze the similarities and dissimilarities in the two languages. The following tables will further clarify the system of articulations of both the languages.

The classification of Assamese vowels

Place of articulation, manner of articulation	Front	Central or middle	Back
Close	ই (i)		ঊ (u)
Half Close	এ' (e)		ও (o)
Half Open	এ (ə)		অ' (ʌ)
Open		আ (a:)	অ (ʌ)

Classification of English vowels

Place of articulation, manner of articulation	Front	Central or middle	Back
Close	i, i:		U, U:
Half Close	e	ɜ:	a:
Half Open	æ	a	ɔ
Open	^		a:

Hence, where the articulation of the above sounds is concerned, the mother tongue influence certainly helps. A knowledge of these sounds would hasten the process of learning the second language. What is evident from the two tables is the fact that whereas many of the vowel sounds are common to the two languages, each language possesses sounds that are not present in the other. For example – the 'a' sound in Assamese which is articulated in the middle and the 'a' in English which is articulated in the back of the tongue. Further, the Assamese language does not contain the 'æ' sound. Therefore, the researcher found that majority of students would pronounce words containing that particular sound as 'a:'. Thus, they pronounce 'mæn' as 'ma:n' in the same manner 'bΛs' was pronounced as 'ba:s'.

Similarly, the consonants are also illustrated with the help of the tables as follows:

Table 1: The classification of Assamese consonants

Place of Articulation	Bilabial		Labio-dental		Dental		Alveolar		Postal Alveolar		Palato Alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glottal
Manner of Articulation	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.
Plosive	প (p)	ব (b)					ত (t)	দ (d)							ক (k)	গ (g)	
Aspirated	ফ (ph)	ভ (bh)					থ (th)	দ্য (dth)							খ (kh)	ঘ (gh)	
Affricates																	
Fricatives																	
Nasal		ম (m)					ন (n)								ং (ŋ)		ঞ (ŋg)
Lateral							ল (l)										
Frictionless continuation or glide									ৱ (r)				য় (j)				
Semi-Vowels		ৱ (w)															

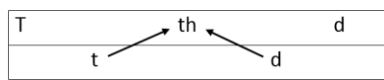
Table 2: The classification of English consonants

Place of Articulation	Bilabial		Labio-dental		Dental		Alveolar		Postal Alveolar		Palato Alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glottal
Manner of Articulation	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.	V.D.	V.L.
Plosive	p	b					t	d							k	g	
Affricates																	
Fricatives			f	v	θ	ð	s	z			tʃ	dʒ					h
Nasal							n										ŋ
Lateral							l										
Frictionless continuation or glide									r				j				(w)
Semi-Vowels		w															

What the researcher finds from the two tables is that many of the consonant sounds are also common to the two languages like the vowel sounds, e.g., the nasal sounds, semi-vowels, lateral, frictionless continuation plosives etc. are classified in a similar way. Likewise, the fricatives alveolar sounds are also classified in the same way. This same manner and place of articulation of these sounds in both the languages greatly help the Assamese learners of the English language. But there are no sounds in Assamese that replicate the following sounds of English: For example:

tʃ, dz, ʃ, ʒ, θ and ð in English. tʃ and dz are articulated as affricate palato alveolar. ʃ and ʒ are articulated as fricative palato alveolar. θ and ð are articulated as fricative dental. Thus, f and v are also articulated as fricative labio-dental. On the other hand, the Assamese sounds ফ (ph) and ভ (bh) are articulated as plosive aspirated bilabial, থ (th) and দ্য (dth) as plosive aspirated alveolar and খ (kh) and ঘ (gh) as plosive aspirated velar. Thus, it is found that in the articulation of common

sounds the mother tongue influence helps but in the utterance of sounds that are not common the pull of mother tongue becomes interference. Similarly, the influence interferes in their English pronunciations leading to incorrect pronunciations as they substitute the L<sub>2</sub> sounds from their mother tongue. For example, it may be mentioned that the sounds 't', 'th' and 'd' the learners often substitute 't' and 'd' for the 'th' sound. The following table or box illustrates the case.



In vernacular medium schools, the students are not taught the proper knowledge of intonation and stress in English language. Less emphasis is laid on pronunciation. In the course of the survey, the researcher interacted with almost 300 students of various classes and found a number of common interferences due to the influence of mother tongue. These may be mentioned as follows:

- (i) Students pronounce prefixes and suffixes as /e/, which are spelled with 'e' e.g., wanted, perfect, raided etc. instead of pronouncing in R.P. English as wanted /wa:nted/ perfect /p3:flkt/ lifted /liflftd/ etc.
- (ii) Students don't follow the English sounds of sion, ssion, tion, son, shion etc. separately. They pronounce these syllables or sounds as 'chan' or 'son' which comes from the Assamese letter 'চ' (cha), e.g., instead of expression /lk'spreʃn/, commission /k 'mɪʃn/, grandson /grændsan/ etc.
- (iii) Similarly, they often pronounce these sounds such as s, ch, c, sh, ish etc. as the same sounds like the Assamese letter 'চ' (ch) or (s) and 'ছ' (chh). E.g., torch, books, service etc.
- (iv) It was noticed that major portion of the students including teachers pronounce the article 'the' as 'dʌ' or 'di' instead of /ðə/ or /di:/
- (v) Again, in certain words, students pronounce /ei/ as /e:/ for instance: phrase, gate, date etc.
- (vi) They also mispronounce certain common words. For instance, bury as 'bʌri' not as /beri/. 'breath' as 'breath' not as /bri:ð/ etc.

Thus, students who study in their regional language medium school pronounce the English words as they do the words of their regional language. In this context, V.K. Gokak says, “Our pupils indeed many of their teachers speak English as if it were Hindi, Bengali, Marathi or Tamil. Our regional speech habits have absorbed spoken English and regionalized it.”<sup>10</sup>

- (i) Likewise, the influence of the mother tongue can also be seen in the spellings of the learners. Poor pronunciation leads to the poor spelling. For example:

They wrote - to instead of two

know instead of no  
their instead of there  
hear instead of here  
man instead of men etc.

- (ii) There are some words in English which are pronounced incorrectly by some illiterate or unconscious persons and hearing these words the students make such mistakes in spelling also. For example:

They write- reining instead of raining

conection instead of connection  
eliphant instead of elephant  
through instead of through etc.

At the same time, there are also some co-relationships between English Grammar and Assamese Grammar in parts of speech, tense, conjugation, gender number, sentence, voice change, speech, prefixes and suffixes, punctuation, proverbs etc. If the learners of English have a sound knowledge of the basic and fundamental concepts in the grammar of their mother tongue then by the constant help of encouraging and enterprising teachers, they may find it easy to grasp the idea of formation and structure in English language too. This is because, there is much that is similar in the parts of speech of both Assamese and English parts of speech. For example, an Assamese learner of English language learns parts of speech in his/her mother tongue as 'bishesya' (noun), 'sarbanam' (pronoun), 'bisheshan' (adjective), 'kriya' (verb), 'kriya bisheshan' (adverb), 'abyaya' (preposition), 'bhaavbudhak abyaya' (interjection), 'sanjukak abyaya' (conjunction). Regarding tense, there are three main tenses in both the languages such as 'bartaman kal' (present tense), 'atit kal' (past tense) and 'bhabishyat kal' (future tense). The main characteristics and features of these tenses in both languages are same from the point of their meaning.

These are as follows:

<u>English</u>	<u>Assamese</u>
Noun – Ram, John etc.	Bisheshya – Ram, John adi
Pronoun – a few, so many	Sarbanam – keitaman, iman bilak
Adjective – beautiful, bad etc.	Bisheshan – sundar, beya adi
Verb – do, take etc.	Kriyapad – kara, luwa adi
Adverb – daily, alone etc.	Kriya Bisheshan – nitaw, akale adi
Preposition – from, to etc.	Abya – para, loi adi
Interjection – oh, alas etc.	Bhaavbudhak Abya – acharit, hai adi
Conjunction – and, but etc.	Sanjujak Abya – aru, kintu adi

Structure of tense may be shown this way:




<u>English</u>		<u>Assamese</u>
Present Tense: We drink water	➡	Bartaman Kal: ami pani pi khao We water drink
Past Tense: I ate rice	➡	Atit Kal: moi bhat khalu I rice ate
Future Tense: She will go	➡	Bhabishyat Kal: tai jabo She will go

Proficiency in above points of his/her mother tongue would greatly benefit him/her in English grammar too. Hence, the mother tongue influence proves beneficial to him/her herein.

In case of gender also basic similarity is there.

<u>English</u>	<u>Assamese</u>
Masculine gender: king, hero etc.	Punglinga: raja, nayak adi
Feminine gender: queen, girl etc.	Strilinga: rani, nayeeka adi
Neuter gender: book, table etc.	Kliwa linga: kitap, maz adi
Common gender: parent, child etc.	Uvoi linga: pita-mata, lara-chuwali adi

Examples of sentences:

<u>English</u>		<u>Assamese</u>
<p><i>Simple Sentence</i></p> <p>The cow is a four-footed animal.</p>		<p><i>Saral Bakya</i></p> <p>garu ebidh charithengia jantu</p>
<p><i>Complex Sentence</i></p> <p>The man whom you met yesterday is my brother.</p>		<p><i>Jatil Bakya</i></p> <p>kali tumi jijan manuhak lag paisila heijan mur kakaideo</p>
<p><i>Compound Sentence</i></p> <p>Work hard or you will fail.</p>		<p><i>Jaugik Bakya</i></p> <p>kathur parishram kara nahale tumi akritakaiva hoba</p>

Number is also focused by the researcher.

<u>English</u>		<u>Assamese</u>	
<i>Sing. Num.</i>	<i>Plu. Num.</i>	<i>Sing. Num.</i>	<i>Plu. Num.</i>
Boy	Boys	lara	larabur
Book	Books	kitap	kitapbur

By comparing the items of grammar in both the languages it is seen that the pre knowledge acquired in the mother tongue helps the learners of English language. In this regard W.M. Ryburn says, "If sufficient attention is paid to the teaching of the mother tongue, and if it is well taught, habits may be formed in that classroom which will be of greatest value in connection with learning of English."<sup>11</sup>

Again, voice change is also practiced by students in both the languages. For example:

<u>English</u>	<u>Assamese</u>
We drink water. (Active Voice)	ami pani pi khao (kartibachya) we water drink
Water is drunk by us. (Passive Voice)	pani amar dwara pi khowa hay (karmabachya) water us by drunk is

Speech is also discussed as follows. For example:

<u>English</u>	<u>Assamese</u>
Ram says, "Water is liquid." (Direct speech)	→ rame kaise, "pani juliya hay" (pratakhya ukti) Ram says, water liquid is
Ram says that water is liquid. (Indirect speech)	→ rame kaise je pani juliya hay (parukhya ukti) Ram says that water liquid is

Although the use of the mother tongue is helpful in teaching and learning English language in some basic and similar topics or matters it is also absolutely true that the principles of grammar of the mother tongue differ from English basically in structure, word-order, vocabulary etc. According to Dr. Jean Forrester, “The mother tongue should never be used where it is possible to convey ideas through



English, through pictures, objects or actions.<sup>9,12</sup> There are various in which the languages differ. For instance, structure: The placement of words into sentences is different between Assamese and English which is shown below:

- (a) The form of an English sentence is that S+V+O but of an Assamese form is that S+O+V.
- (b) The helping verb precedes the principal verb in English whereas it follows the main verb or principal verb in Assamese.

For example: English – Leela is reading a book.

Assamese – tai ekhan kitap pahi ase  
She a book reading is

- (c) Mentioning a verb in the English language is a must, whereas in Assamese, it is not.

For example: English – We are Indian.

S + V + Adjective  
Assamese – ami bharatiya (haon)  
S + Adjective + V

The influence of the structure and word-order of the mother tongue emerges as an obstacle to learning correct English. As mentioned earlier, most of the students write the sentences or phrases according to the structure or word-order of their mother tongue. For example: They write – the table's top instead of writing – on the top of the table.

Similarly, the students of vernacular medium schools are also found to confuse the possessives. They write “This book is my”, instead of “This book is mine”. This is your instead of this is yours. The pronouns are also used incorrectly. They write:

- (d) This is Ram which is a good boy instead of Ram who is a good boy etc.

In case of preposition also the students make mistakes due to the influence of mother tongue. For example: He was absent in the meeting. They use 'in' in place of 'from'. This is an exact translation of Assamese. They again write – he is second, I have pet dog etc. in place of he is the second, I have a pet dog. In these sentences the articles 'the' and 'a' are omitted. As a result, the sentences don't qualify the complete meanings. This case can be attributed to their mother tongue influence.

Likewise, in forming questions in English the question word or the helping verbs are used in the beginning of a sentence but in Assamese an interrogative sentence is written by using a question word in an assertive sentence without changing the question pattern.

For instance: English – What is your name?

Assamese – tumar nam ki?  
your name what

Again, in English in information seeking question the 'Wh-word' is always in the initial position.

For instance: Where is your book?

Where do you come from?

In Assamese, the rule is different. The question word is normally at the end of the sentence.

For instance: tumar pen kot?

your pen where  
kalamtur dam kiman?  
pen costs how much

Thus, on examining the students oral as well as written work the researcher found the mother tongue influence had acted as a hindrance in their learning English. Though as mentioned earlier, certain sounds as well as principles of grammar are common in English and Assamese and those influences may help the English language learners to some extent, nevertheless, the differences too are large and the pool of the mother tongue results in interference. The next chapter deals with how the English language teacher deals with the situation.

If we turn to the history of the English language in India, we find that the missionaries and other non-official British and Europeans contributed much to the spread of English in India. After all, they were the pioneers of English Education in our country. Many British merchants, radical Indians and other also encouraged English in India with their strong supports. English education became very popular among the Indians. However, even though much emphasis has been laid on the importance of English as a tool of communication in today's fast emerging global scenario and the imperative need to make all students proficient in English has been stressed, when we turn to the practical aspect of ELT the results before us are discouraging. It is found that thousands of students fail at examinations every year. They fail to acquire the required standard in spite of years passed in

learning English. By the end of the eighteenth century, there appeared more detailed books on grammar, pronunciation and other areas of English. English literature became a part of the curriculum. In about 1960, one could not pass the school learning examination in India if he did not pass in English.

As a result, the researcher finds English language teachers and students in rural based vernacular medium schools struggling to come to terms with a language, which, to many of them can almost be considered as a foreign language. Language cannot be considered in isolation from culture; for, any language is a repository of cultural traditions and knowledge system of a particular people. Hence, the students belonging to various communities, possessing various mother tongues acquire language in specific socio-cultural contexts. These social, cultural and demographic variables greatly influence the learning of the second language.

Next, the researcher goes to analyze various methods and approaches applied by ELT teachers. On the survey of 20 vernacular medium schools the researcher discovered that most of the teachers used the old methods, which were largely based on the behaviorist paradigms.

- (a) **Translation cum grammar method:** Around 20% of the teachers still persisted with the translation-cum-grammar method. Through this method the meaning of English sentences, phrases, words and paragraphs is taught by means of word-for-word translation into the mother tongue. The teacher also interprets the grammatical rules and regulations. This method has more disadvantages than advantages. Advantages are that it saves time, it helps in enhancing the students' vocabulary. But no emphasis is put on speaking, reading and writing. This leaves the students inadequately equipped to face the challenges of the language. It also fails to teach correct articulation, intonation and pronunciation.

- (b) **Direct or Natural Method:** This method was followed by the teachers in English medium school. In this method English is taught through direct explanation in English. Advantages of this method are that a direct bond is established between word and idea, world and experience. This helps to clarify the meaning of the word; the unit of teaching is 'sentence' and not word. Similarly, audio-visual material is used extensively to explain the meaning, and much stress is laid on speech because direct association can be made by oral teaching only. But this method can be used only if the L2 students are already familiar with the language. This is not possible in the vernacular medium schools in the primary level.

Due to some drawbacks in old methods, there have been adopted a few new methods such as Dr. Wests' New Method, Substitution Method and Bilingual Method.

- (a) **Dr. Wests' New Method:** This method gives more emphasis on the development of reading abilities and improvement of vocabulary. This is because reading facilitates speaking and writing. They can have an idea of structure of English language by reading. In the opinion of Dr. Wests reading ability can be developed by reading books in solitude with ease, interest and pleasure. Advantages of this method are of the four aspects of language learning it helps to develop one aspect i.e., reading. It initiates pupils for self-activity because oral reading and silent reading both amount to self-activity. The disadvantages are that it ignores three aspects (viz. understanding, speaking and writing) of language learning. In the absence of other activities, reading becomes monotonous.

- (b) **Substitution Method or Substitution Table Method:** This method was adopted by H.S. Palmer. In this method, words of one sentence are substituted by other words. The teacher has to repeat the model sentence two-three times in a natural voice that is audible to all students. He corrects the errors of pronunciation, articulation, accent and information in the students. In the eyes of the researcher, this method was followed by 30% of the teachers in Sadiya sub-division. The advantages of this system are that in substitution tables the linguistic material is arranged in a systematic way and the learner learns a large number of sentences without memorizing the grammatical rules. Likewise, it is a natural way of learning a language and it ensures correct pronunciation, articulation, information and fluency by oral drill etc. However, there are disadvantages such as it is not possible to explain the rules of grammar, and it lays more emphasis on written works. It cannot be used to teach prose, poetry and composition etc.

- (c) **Bilingual Method:** Professor C.D. Dodson of Wales invented this method. In this method, English is taught with the help of the mother tongue. The mother tongue is not used exactly as in translation method but is used to explain the meaning of new word, phrase, idioms, sentences, grammatical points and rules. Like other methods, this method has also some advantages and disadvantages that may be stated as follows. The teacher makes conversation easier by making use of the mother tongue and it doesn't require specially trained teachers. It suits both rural and urban schools and it forms linguistic habits of L2 while mother tongue. The disadvantages are that a contrast between the features of English and mother tongue is likely to confuse students. It was found in the survey that 70% of the teachers used this

method. However, one caution, the teacher needs to take, is to beware of the over use of the L1. The researcher had conducted an experiment in a few M.E. schools in Sadiya to determine the percentage of L1 used in the English class by taping the entire class of 45 minutes taken by the English teacher. It was found that 70% of the class was conducted in the mother tongue, Assamese.

On categorizing the L<sub>1</sub> used the researcher found that 20% was used as social interaction, 30% for learning strategies such as checking homework and comprehension, 20% for direction for activities.

The researcher suggested the following steps to the teachers:

- Every teacher should give a glossary of classroom instructions in L<sub>2</sub> to assist the students in following him.
- He should continue to interact with them but in English, giving translations of words, where necessary.
- Students should be given verbal uses in L<sub>2</sub> – such as 'thank you', 'sorry', 'pardon'.

The teachers followed the above and gave the researcher a feedback two months later. The teachers positively said that the suggestions had reduced the amount of L<sub>1</sub> spoken in class by 30%. Further, the reduction had also aroused the students' interest in speaking English which was a good symptom of the students of a vernacular medium school.

Apart from the methods used in teaching English there are also various approaches to the teaching of the English language. Some of them are the structural approach, the situational approach, constructivist teaching, differentiated instruction, inclusive education, developmental learning, co-operative learning, multiple intelligences learning styles, integrated curriculum, action learning and thinking skills. The structural approach and situational approaches are explained in detail in this paper as the concerned researcher found the teachers using both these approaches during the survey.

**Structural Approach:** In this approach, the arrangement of words is made in such a way so as to form suitable pattern of sentences. In the case of this approach, mastery of structure is more important than the acquisition of vocabulary. It is also known as "New Approach" or "Aural-Oral Approach". There are four kinds of structures such as sentence pattern, phrase pattern, formulas and idioms. The approach is applied for teaching the four fundamental skills namely understanding, speaking, reading and writing. While the researcher approached to schools (Assamese medium and English medium) in the survey and noticed that 70% teachers followed this approach. It has some merits or advantages; it puts more emphasis on speech or oral aspect of learning. It can be adopted for all stages of education. The students are provided with enough opportunities to the students to express their ideas and feelings. Disadvantages are that it is the most suitable only for lower classes. It does not help to teach the prescribed textbooks etc.

**Situational Approach:** This approach is related to the teachers' creation of a real situation in the classroom. English is basically taught to the students in this situational approach almost in the same way in which a child learns his own mother tongue. Stress is laid on constant repetition in this approach. The teacher uses appropriate materials to create proper situations. He revises again and again as well as puts questions and answers himself. In the survey, the researcher noticed that this approach was practiced by the teachers in English medium schools. Merits are that it lays stress on learning through hearing and it lays emphasis on learning by play. Further, it follows the principle of variety and simplicity. Similarly, disadvantages are that it can be used to teach only well selected words and sentence patterns as well as it suits teaching only lower classes. Again, due to over drill the class becomes monotonous. It is important for the teacher of L2 to realize that methods will have to be adopted to the specific needs of the classroom. The teacher has to make learning effective, apprehending the varying learning styles of the students. While it is true that the teaching of a language like English appears in such varied design that is very difficult to generalize practices. A prospective teacher should basically know all the prevailing principles and practices as well as be equipped with latest information and techniques. On the other hand, he or she should know the problems in the English classroom to provide effective English teaching to the learners.

## 5. CONCLUSION:

At the end of this paper, it should be cited that the role of the teacher is very important in the field of education. He is regarded as the backbone of the education system. The main duty of a teacher is to extend his help to the students in every aspect of their life and motivate them to learn. Thus, an ELT teacher should be abreast with the latest techniques of teaching. The students should be taught with a proper knowledge of the teaching aids to be used in the classroom. All the learners should be attracted by his seriousness, good temperament, sympathy and sense of humor. The mother tongue should be used only as a tool or a guide to the learners. They should be encouraged by the teacher to speak in English. The teacher should teach English in such a way that the students make it a part of their life.

The teacher should make use of innovative teaching aids. The teacher should try new practices in place of age-old methods. For example: story telling can be an effective method in teaching children a new language as it also captures the attention of the students. Further, in case of the students of higher classes as well as the students of degree classes communicative activities like discussions, projects, quizzes and games can be run to make the classes interesting. Plays and playwriting can also make a class engaging to the learner. But in the higher stages, the study of language becomes more critical as far as its structure and the meanings as well as the use words are concerned. The plan, form and structure must be checked and guided by the teacher in their written work.

As mentioned earlier, there are many educationists and scholars who lay stress on the use of mother tongue in ELT classes. It is also true that the use of the mother tongue cannot be avoided; on the other hand, the excessive use of it creates barriers in learning the English language. In exploring the influence of the mother tongue in ELT classes, the researcher found that the mother tongue helps the learners of English language in some common aspects such as the basic skills. The learners of English find a great help in developing a reading habit in English, if they are proficient in their mother tongues. As W.M. Ryburn observes, "Students are with difficulty persuaded to read any English book that the very often books provided for extra reading are too difficult to be read easily. But another reason is that a test for reading is not created in connection with the mother tongue. Once the reading habit is formed in the mother tongue, will soon manifest itself in English also. This is where many of our schools are failing and here, perhaps more than anywhere else, the teacher of the mother tongue can aid his English colleagues and mother tongue can have a helpful influence on English."<sup>13</sup>

From the interviews with the teachers taken in the area, the researcher gathered that according to them of all the approaches and methods they preferred the bilingual method. However, the researcher believes that excessive use of the mother tongue in the classroom tell on the atmosphere of an English class. As a result of this, the students do not develop their verbal skills in English. The learners are accustomed to the pronunciation of the English words, influenced by the mother tongue. Similarly, the pool of the mother tongue interferes in their learning of the English grammar in many aspects such as structure, word-order etc. Although it has to be agreed that there are some similar aspects in both the languages. At the same time, one cannot do away with the mother tongue completely. The researcher himself has taught hundreds of students of middle and high schools for five to six years. During the period he felt that the occasional use of the mother tongue is useful and necessary for a better comprehension of the learners. Moreover, it is a quick method to test whether a learner knows the meaning of a word or not by asking him to give his mother tongue equivalent. During the survey, 10 students of 7<sup>th</sup> standard in an M.E. school were asked to write an essay on physical exercise within 200 words in Assamese and English. It was marked that those pupils who had a sound knowledge of grammar and possessed good writing skill in Assamese could write well in English too. From his observation, the researcher came to the conclusion that if the students have knowledge of how to write in their mother tongue this is reflected in other languages like English too. In another survey, the concerned person interacted with some beginners of English learning, he felt that in the early stages, the learners greatly feel the necessity to use the mother tongue. The teachers are also bound to create an artificial environment to teach them English.

With an intention to take into an account the opinions and views of different students and teachers as to how the mother tongue helps the students in learning English; the researcher distributed some questionnaires to them. Almost each and everybody wrote about the necessity of the mother tongue in ELT classes. According to them, the mother tongue greatly helps in their understanding of particular aspects of the English language. The teachers too acknowledge the inevitability of the use of the mother tongue for a clearer understanding. Further, the researcher too, as a teacher, has experience from his practical field that if he does not use the mother tongue in the class, the students do not comprehend the lesson completely. This had led him to conclude that as judicious use of the mother tongue is highly necessary in the English class to make it interesting and comprehensible to the students. As C.D. Dodson says, "The mother tongue is used to prepare the pupil in such a manner that the students can achieve true bilingualism."<sup>14</sup> Also, the researcher must add that the excessive use of the mother tongue will have a contrary effect on ELT classes. If the teacher constantly converses in Assamese, the students will not be exposed to English at all. Teachers need to guide students into the L<sub>2</sub> or English through the use of Assamese. Their ultimate aim should be to make the students confident enough to be free of the dependency of the mother tongue. The students should be inculcated to speak in English only in the class room. On the contrary, the teacher has to use mother tongue if necessary.

By this analytical study or observation of the influence of the mother tongue in ELT classes and the advantages and disadvantages the researcher concludes that constant use of the mother tongue may create some disadvantages in the actual atmosphere of teaching English in the classroom in the vernacular medium schools. The Assamese language or mother tongue should be considered as a tool to invite the learners of English just like a crutch it should merely assist the learner to take his first steps in learning a new language. Ultimately, he must learn to walk freely in the same manner, the ultimate goal of the learner should be to speak and write correct English.

**REFERENCES:**

- I. Bordoloi, Nabakanta & Deka, Hitesh. (2006): Modern English Grammar & Composition Guwahati; Assam Publishing Company
- II. Bansal, R.K. & Harrison, J. B. (1998): Spoken English; Mumbai: Orient Longman Limited
- III. Chystal, David. (1985): Linguistics; New Zealand: Penguin Books (N.Z.)
- IV. Bhagat, U.G. (1998): English (Paper: III) for NET and SET Examination; Pune: Barsha Prakashan
- V. Das, Lakhya Hira. (1984): Prak-Biswa Bidyalayar Shikhya; Guwahati: Prajnar Prakashan.
- VI. Das, Haliram. (1993): Asomiya Matri Bhasha Shikhyan Paddhati; Calcutta: Shribhumi Publishing Company.
- VII. Dwight, Bolinger. (1968): Aspect of Language; New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc.
- VIII. Gibaldi, Joseph. (2004): MLA Hand book for writers of Research Papers (Sixth edition); New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Private Limited.
- IX. Jespersen, Otto. (1997): Growth and Structure of English Language; Calcutta: Manjar Khan, Oxford University Press.
- X. Murthy, Jayanti Dakshina. (1998): Contemporary English Grammar; New Delhi: Book Palace.
- XI. Pahuja, N.P. (2006): Teaching of English; New Delhi: Anmol Publication Pvt. Ltd.
- XII. Roy, B.C. (2003): Method of the Teaching of English; Lucknow: Prakashan Kendra.
- XIII. Sarkar, P.K. & D.E. (1991): A text book of Higher English Grammar & Composition (General Edition); Calcutta: P.C. Bhowl on behalf of Book Syndicate Private Limited.
- XIV. Sharma, Dr. Ram Nath. (2005): Contemporary English Teaching; Delhi: S.S. Chhabra.
- XV. Sharma, Madan. (1995): Asomiya Bhasha Shikhyan Paddhati; Guwahati: Student's Store/Ajay Kr. Dutta.
- XVI. Sharma, Mukunda Madhaba. (1991): Assamese for All; Sri Satish Chandra Chaudhury/Assam Sahitya Sabha.
- XVII. Thomson, A.J. & Martinet, A.V. (1987): A Practical English Grammar (Fourth Edition); New Delhi: R. Dayal, Oxford University Press.
- XVIII. Wood, F.T. (1965): A Remedial English Grammar for Foreign Students; Madras: S.G. Wasani for Macmillan India Limited.
- XIX. Wren, C.L. (1996): The English Language; New Delhi: Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

**Notes:**

- I. Haliram Das, Asomiya Matribhasha Shikhyon Paddhati (Calcutta: Sri Bhumi Publishing Company, 1993), P.3.
- II. Ibid, P. 4.
- III. Prof B.C. Roy, Method, The Teaching of English (Lucknow: Prakashan Kendra, 2003), P. 1-2.
- IV. N.P. Pahuja, Teaching of English (New Delhi: Anmol Publication Pvt. Ltd., 2006), P. 2.
- V. Madan Vharma, Asomiya Bhasha Paddhati (Guwahati: Student's Stores, 1995), P. 27.
- VI. R.K. Bansal, J.B. Harrison, Spoken English (Mumbai: Orient Longman Limited, 1998), P. 11.
- VII. Madan Sharma, OPCit, P. 26.
- VIII. R.K. Bansal, J.B. Harrison, OPCit, P. 53.
- IX. Dr. Ram Nath Sharma, Contemporary English Teaching (Delhi: S.S. Chhabra for Sarjeet publication, 2005), P. 239.
- X. Ibid, P. 210.
- XI. Dr. Ram Nath Sharma, OPCit, P. 155.
- XII. Prof B.C. Roy, OPCit, P. 87.
- XIII. Prof B.C. Roy, Ibid, P. 27.
- XIV. Prof. U.G. Bhagat, English for NET and SET Examination Pare (ii) (Pune: Barsha Prakarhan, 1998), P. 229.